DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 267 101 TM 860 188

TITLE	Measuring Student Achievement: Comparable Test Results for Participating Southern States, the South, and the Nation.
INSTITUTION	Southern Regional Education Board, Atlanta, Ga.
PUB DATE	85
NOTE	17p.; For a related document, see TM 860 189.
AVAILABLE FROM	Southern Regional Education Board, 1340 Spring Street, N.W., Atlanta, GA 30309 ($3.00).
PUB TYPE	Reports - Evaluative/Feasibility (142) -- Statistical Data (110)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Academic Achievement; *Comparative Testing; *Cooperative Programs; *Educational Assessment; *Grade 11; High Schools; National Programs; *Reading Achievement; Reading Tests; State Programs; Testing Programs; Test Results
IDENTIFIERS	*National Assessment of Educational Progress; *Southern Regional Education Board

ABSTRACT

Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) states were invited in June 1984 to participate in a project with the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) to assess the reading achievement of eleventh grade students. Florida, Tennessee and Virginia accepted and worked with SREB and NAEP staff to develop and administer the testing program. Administered in April 1985, the project findings provided the participating states with a current and reliable measure of how their students' reading achievement compares with national and regional results, and for the first time they have comparable data on how their students' achievement compares with students' achievement in other states. A summary of score comparisons of the reading assessment are provided for eleventh grade students in the nation and in the NAEP Southeastern region (excluding the SREB states of Maryland, Oklahoma and Texas). The national and regional averages include students in public and private schools, while the participating SREB states included only public school students. The state comparisons are made to the national and regional testing administered in Spring 1984. The SREB/NAEP project also included a "background and attitudes" survey of students which is available from the individual states. (PN)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

TM

ED267101

Measuring Student Achievement:

Comparable Test Results for Participating Southern States, the South, and the Nation

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

M. A. Sullivan

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

X This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

TM 860 158

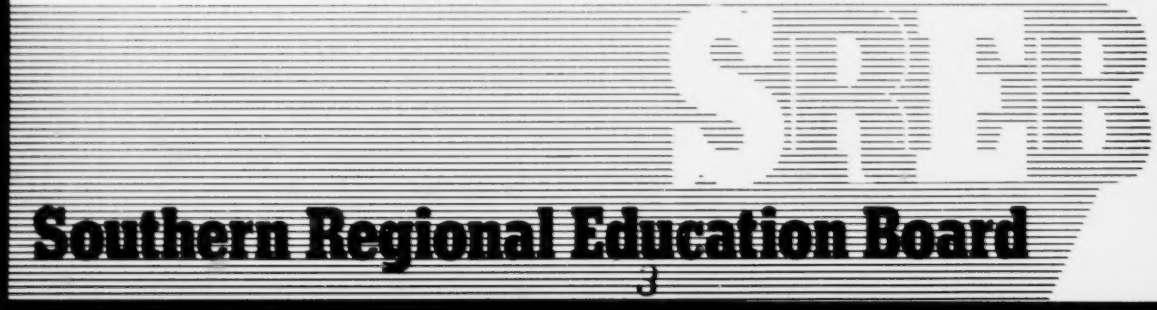
Southern Regional Education Board

Measuring Student Achievement:

Comparable Test Results for Participating Southern States, the South, and the Nation

A Report on the
Southern Regional Education Board / National Assessment of Educational Progress Testing Project with Florida, Tennessee, and Virginia

1340 Spring Street, N.W. • Atlanta, Georgia 30309 • 1985 • $3.00



FOREWORD

For the first time perhaps ever, several states know how well their eleventh grade students read compared to current and truly national results, compared to a region of the nation, and compared to each other. The states are Florida, Tennessee, and Virginia. These states, in conjunction with the Southern Regional Education Board and the National Assessment of Educational Progress, by design, have used a common test with a representative sample of students in each state to measure the reading proficiency of high school juniors.

What is so unusual about this? In the first place, it has never been done before. States have never cooperated in a joint student testing program that has sought comparable and current data. On the contrary, the commonly used testing programs provide student achievement information that is not comparable among states, and is often based on measures that are several years old. The SREB/NAEP testing project adds a new dimension to state-level student achievement information. It does not suggest replacing other testing programs that states use to diagnose individual student's strengths and weaknesses, but it does point the way for new measures of student achievement which will be important to state education policymakers.

The states of Florida, Tennessee, and Virginia should be applauded for the leadership they have demonstrated in breaking new ground by demonstrating that measuring student achievement in comparable ways among the states is possible and feasible. (They should also be congratulated because the test results show that the reading proficiency of the eleventh grade students in each of these states is above both the regional and national averages.)

During his term as chairman of the Southern Regional Education Board, Governor Lamar Alexander of Tennessee challenged the South "to be the leader in measuring educational progress." This project with the National Assessment of Educational Progress and other new state efforts to measure student achievement and factors that influence achievement are evidence that the challenge is being answered. Activities planned for 1985-86 by the Southern Regional Education Board in conjunction with the National Assessment of Educational Progress and possible programs to be developed by the Chief State School Officers will give Southern states further opportunities.

The long-range goal is to sustain educational progress in the South. Timely, credible measures of student achievement that keep the focus on education and raise states' sights for quality improvement will be important to sustain this progress.

Winfred L. Godwin
President

CURRENT, COMPARABLE STATE RESULTS OF STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT ON THE NATIONAL ASSESSMENT OF EDUCATIONAL PROGRESS*

Eleventh grade students in Florida, Tennessee, and Virginia are reading above the Southern regional and national averages. Each of the three states are significantly above the national and regional averages in the percentage of these students reaching the basic and intermediate reading levels.** In Virginia a significantly larger percentage of students reached the adept and advanced reading levels than in the nation. Florida's and Tennessee's eleventh grade students are at the national average for these higher reading levels.

Students in Florida, Tennessee, and Virginia answered correctly a significantly higher percentage of items in literal reading skills, inferential reading skills, and study skills than did students across the nation.

Black students in each of the three states demonstrated reading averages at or above the average of black students in the nation; the Virginia average was significantly above the national average. A higher percentage of black eleventh grade students in each of the three states reached the basic and intermediate reading levels than in the region or nation. Black students in the South scored significantly lower than white students. The differences were

---

* The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), funded by the U.S. Office of Education, gathers and disseminates information about student achievement and attitudes in the nation. The tests have been administered over the past 16 years in subjects such as reading, mathematics, and science. Samples of students at three age levels--9, 13, and 17--are chosen as representative of the nation as a whole. Results for subgroups such as sex, race, region of the country, parental education, and type of community are reported.

** See page 9 for NAEP descriptions of reading proficiency levels.

similar to the national gap between black and white students averages, that is, the average reading proficiency of black eleventh-graders is only slightly higher than that of white seventh-graders.

Eleventh grade females in each of the three states, and in the nation and region, had higher reading scores than males. However, eleventh grade males in Florida, Tennessee, and Virginia had significantly higher averages than males in the nation.

Importance of These Results to the Three Participating States, the South, and the Nation

The findings for the three states in the first-of-its-kind Southern Regional Education Board/National Assessment of Educational Progress testing project are important for several reasons.

- These states have the most current and reliable measure of how their students' reading achievement compares to national and regional results, and for the first time they have comparable data on how their students' achievement compares to that in other states. These states have a reliable benchmark to gauge their students' relative achievement levels and they now have a way of determining if their educational progress is keeping pace with an up-to-date measure for selected Southern states, the South, and the nation.

- These states have demonstrated that student achievement can be assessed in ways that make state, regional, and national comparisons possible. Prior to these results it had not been shown that the testing technology could be used in a plan that states

would find feasible, nor had any states ever agreed to cooperate in a student testing program which would produce results that were comparable among states.

- These SREB/NAEP results give states information which goes beyond the high school graduation testing of minimum competency that is common at the eleventh grade. Florida, Tennessee, and Virginia all have high school graduation tests. Many other states have similar tests, and the final passing percentages on these tests are approximately 98 to 99 percent. The tests tell very little about student reading proficiency above rudimentary or basic levels. The results from the National Assessment program show whether students are reading at rudimentary, basic, intermediate, adept, or advanced levels, and the information is presented in ways that define and interpret what these different levels mean.

- The SREB/NAEP project--the process and the results--provides valuable background information on efforts that are being considered for a nationwide program in which all interested states could participate. Chief State School Officers have endorsed the idea of comparable state measures of various educational indicators, including student achievement. The Chiefs will consider proposals this fall, and the experience of Florida, Tennessee, and Virginia with the National Assessment of Educational Progress could be helpful in arriving at a program to be offered to all states. Some states have already expressed an interest in this kind of program. For instance, as a part of the Quality Basic Education Act adopted in 1985, Georgia will participate in the National Assessment of Educational Progress program.

- The SREB/NAEP program offers a way of establishing a legitimate measure for what the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) and American College Testing program (ACT) incorrectly have been used. The SAT and ACT do tell something about student achievement in the states and nation, but they are not based on a representative sample of a state's students and they do not produce comparable state results. The state-based National Assessment program is representative of the achievement of the states' students and does produce comparable results. In addition, the NAEP program goes beyond just reporting numbers (although it does that) and indicates what levels of skills students have and what this means in practical terms.

- The results of the SREB/NAEP project can give the states new insights about college readiness and the need for remedial education. For example, the reading test presents results at five levels from rudimentary to advanced. Eleventh grade students who score at the adept and advanced levels probably possess the reading skills to begin college-level work. College-bound students at the intermediate level may need remedial help; students below this level most certainly will.

New Opportunities for States in 1985-86:
Assessment of Writing as well as Reading Proficiency

Based on the success of the 1984-85 SREB/NAEP project and the fact that in a year or two a nationwide program may be in development, SREB is planning a similar, but expanded, state assessment program for 1985-86 in conjunction with the National Assessment of Educational Progress.

For the 1985-86 school year, SREB and NAEP will provide state-based assessment of writing as well as reading at the eleventh grade. The reading program will be patterned after this year's assessment. It will be given in the spring of 1986 and will provide scores and comparisons based on 1986 national and regional data, as well as the 1984-85 information.

The writing assessment will be new for 1985-86. Very few states assess writing, and virtually none do so based on national results. The National Assessment program will require students to write essays. These will be graded by the National Assessment and compared to the national results and to results in participating states.

All SREB states will be invited to participate in the programs and can choose to be involved in either one or both. Details will be worked out with participating states.

DETAILS AND RESULTS OF THE SREB/NAEP PROJECT

SREB states were invited in June 1984 to participate in the project with the National Assessment of Educational Progress to assess reading achievement of eleventh grade students. Florida, Tennessee, and Virginia accepted the invitation and worked with SREB and NAEP staff to develop and administer the testing program. A sample of eleventh grade students--more than 2,000 in each state--representative of the total public school student population in each state was selected according to specifications provided by NAEP. Students were tested in April of 1985 according to established NAEP testing procedures. Items used for the testing were chosen by NAEP, with concurrence by each participating state. Scores reported for each state include the percentage of students scoring at the following levels established in the 1984 NAEP Reading Assessment: rudimentary, basic, intermediate, adept, and advanced. (See page 9 for a brief description of these levels.) The average scale score was reported for each state. In addition, the results include a breakdown of the percent of items correct for the total test, items testing literal reading skills, items on inferential reading skills, and study skills items.

Comparisons are provided with eleventh grade students in the nation and in the NAEP Southeastern region (which does not include the SREB states of Maryland, Oklahoma, and Texas). The national and regional averages include students in public and private schools, while the participating SREB states included public school students. The state comparisons are made to the national and regional testing that took place in the spring of 1984.

The Reading Report Card: Progress Toward Excellence in Our Schools, recently released by NAEP, gives the results of the 1984 national reading assessment and comparisons to earlier reading assessments in 1971, 1975, and 1980. Results are reported for 7-, 13-, and 17-year-old students across the

nation. The national and regional averages for 17-year-olds will vary slightly from the national and regional averages in the SREB pilot study because the SREB project tested eleventh grade students, which included some students above and below the age of 17.

The SREB/NAEP project also included a "background and attitudes" survey of students. Information from this survey is available from the individual states. The reading assessment results are summarized on the following pages. Detailed results are available from the offices of the state testing directors in Florida, Tennessee, and Virginia, or from SREB.

SREB/NAEP 11th Grade Reading Assessment,
Nation, NAEP Southeastern• Region, Participating SREB States

NAEP Levels of Reading Proficiency

Rudimentary	Performance at this level suggests the ability to carry out simple, discrete reading tasks.
Basic	Performance at this level suggests the ability to understand specific or sequentially related information.
Intermediate	Performance at this level suggests the ability to search for specific information, interrelate ideas, and make generalizations.
Adept	Performance at this level suggests the ability to find, understand, summarize, and explain relatively complicated information.
Advanced	Performance at this level suggests the ability to synthesize and learn from specialized reading materials.

Table 1
Percentage of Students at Various Reading Proficiency Levels

	Nation	Region	Florida	Tennessee	Virginia
Rudimentary	100.0 %	100.0 %	100.0 %	100.0 %	100.0 %
Basic	98.7	98.4	99.3•	99.7•	99.6•
Intermediate	84.8	82.4	87.0•	89.3•	90.9•
Adept	40.2	38.5	42.7	39.4	47.0•
Advanced	5.0	5.0	5.4	4.2	8.5•

Table 2
Percentage of White Students at Various Reading Proficiency Levels

	Nation	Region	Florida	Tennessee	Virginia
Rudimentary	100.0 %	100.0 %	100.0 %	100.0 %	100.0 %
Basic	99.3	99.3	99.5	99.9•	99.7•
Intermediate	89.6	90.4	92.2•	93.6•	94.8•
Adept	46.6	48.9	51.3•	45.8	55.3•
Advanced	6.1	6.9	7.2	5.1	10.9•

•NAEP Southeastern Region does not include three SREB states--Maryland, Oklahoma and Texas.

•Significantly different from the nation at the .05 level.

Table 3
Percentage of Black Students at Various Reading Proficiency Levels

	Nation	Region	Florida	Tennessee	Virginia
Rudimentary	100.0 %	100.0 %	100.0 %	100.0 %	100.0 %
Basic	97.1	96.6	98.6•	98.6	99.1•
Intermediate	68.8	65.6	69.3	73.3	77.6•
Adept	19.1	16.0	15.6	15.3	19.2
Advanced	1.0	1.0	0.4	0.7	0.9

Table 4
Average Reading Proficiency at the 11th Grade Level
Rudimentary (150), Basic (200), Intermediate (250),
Adept (300), Advanced (350)

	All Students	Male	Female	White	Black
Nation	289.3	284.5	294.3	295.8	268.1
Region	287.3	282.7	291.6	297.8	264.7
Florida	292.1•	290.1•	293.9	299.9•	267.0
Tennessee	291.2	289.8•	292.7	297.1	269.3
Virginia	298.4•	296.2•	300.3•	305.7•	273.7•

Table 5
Percent of Items Correct by Item Classification

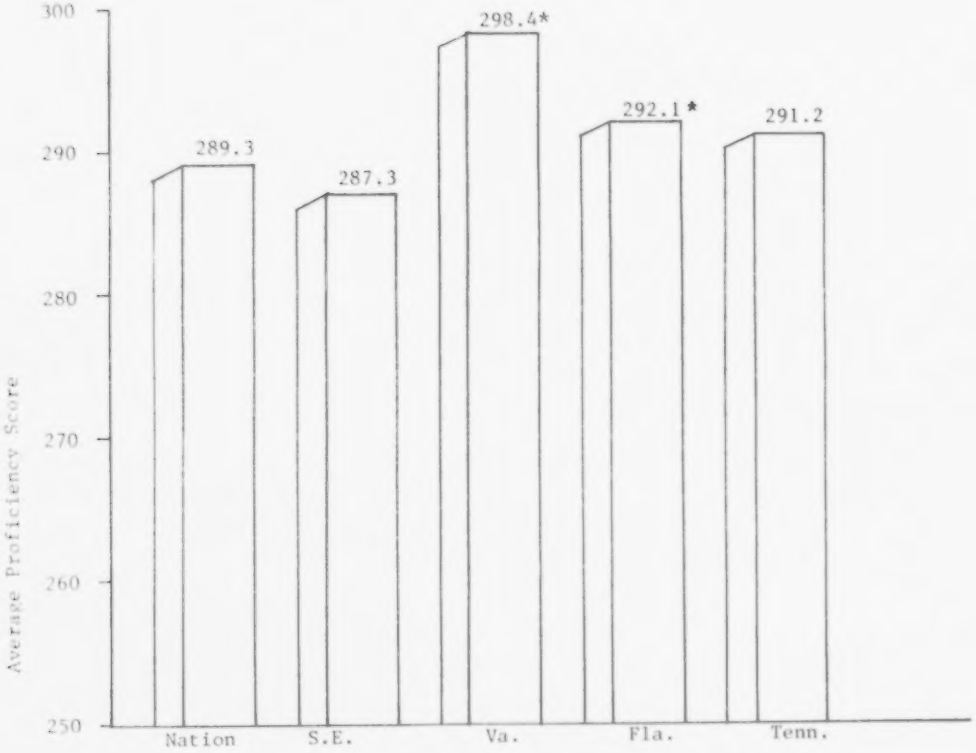
	Total	Literal Reading Skills	Inferential Reading Skills	Study Skills
Nation	69.0%	73.0%	66.9%	68.1%
Region	67.5	71.8	65.1	66.9
Florida	71.6•	75.9•	68.5•	72.2•
Tennessee	71.2•	75.1•	68.7•	71.1•
Virginia	73.9•	76.9•	72.1•	73.8•

•Significantly different from the nation at the .05 level.

Notes: Data for the Nation and NAEP Southeastern Region based on 1984 results; data for SREB pilot states based on 1985 results.

Complete data including standard errors of measurement available upon request from SREB.

Average Reading Proficiency at the Eleventh Grade Level, Nation, NAEP Southeastern Region** and Selected States, 1984 and 1985.

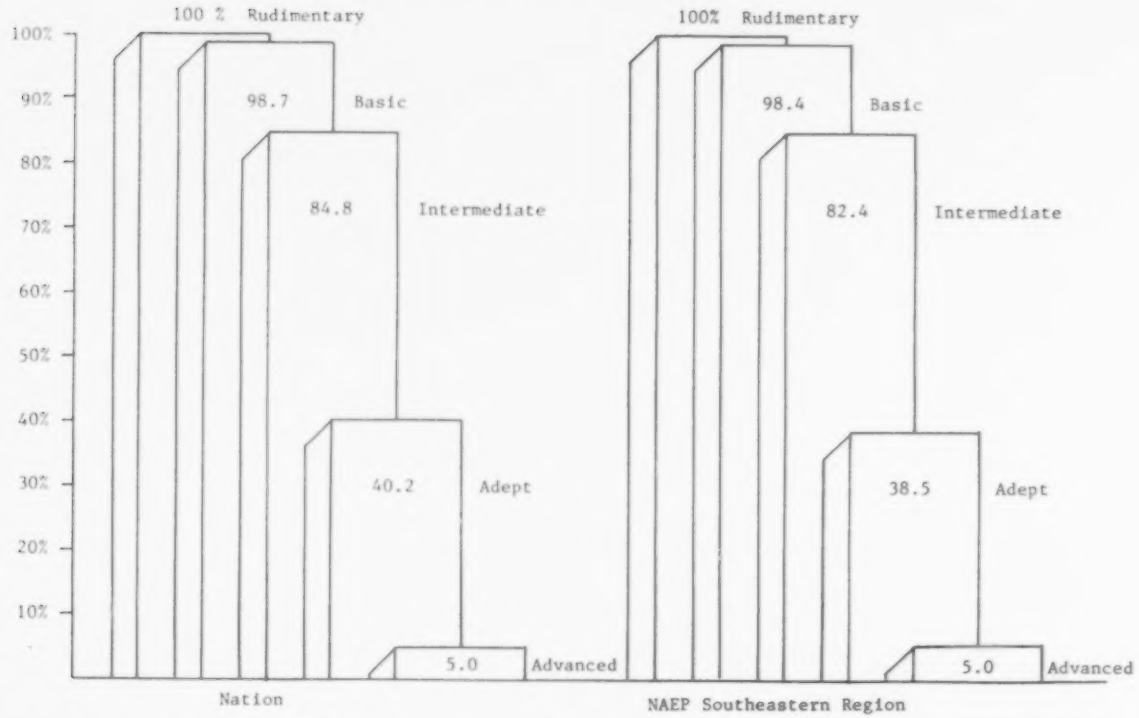


* Significantly different from the Nation at the .05 level.

Source: Based on 1984 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) Reading Achievement for the Nation and the Southeastern Region and National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) Reading Achievement scores for Virginia, Florida, and Tennessee in 1985.

** The NAEP Southeastern Region does not include three SREB states--Maryland, Oklahoma, and Texas.

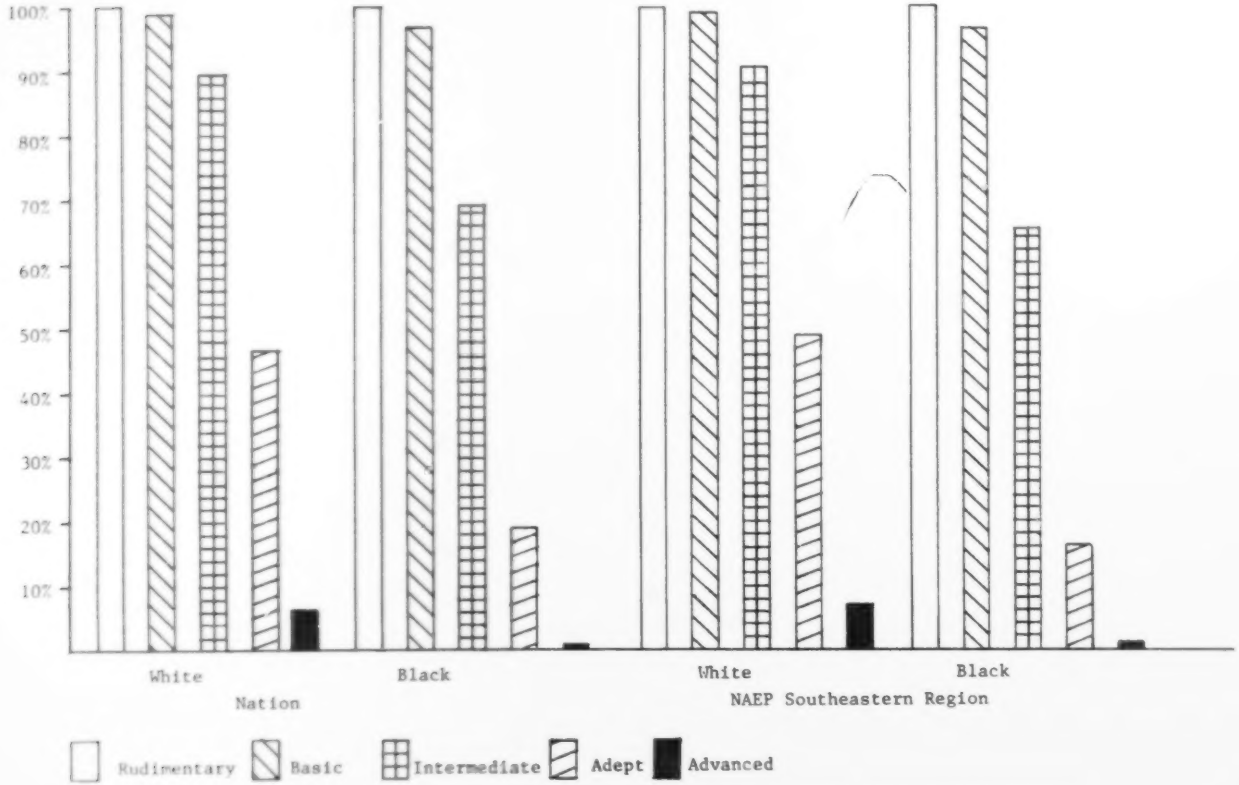
Percentage of Eleventh Grade Students at Various Reading Proficiency Levels in the Nation and the NAEP Southeastern Region* 1984



Source: Based on 1984 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) Reading Achievement.

* The NAEP Southeastern Region does not include three SREB states--Maryland, Oklahoma, and Texas.

Percentage of Eleventh Grade Students at Various Reading Proficiency Levels by Race in the Nation and the NAEP Southeastern Region*



Source: Based on 1984 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) Reading Achievement.

* The NAEP Southeastern Region does not include three SREB states--Maryland, Oklahoma, and Texas.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The SREB/NAEP student testing program outlined in this report, which for the first time provides results that can be compared to current and truly national and regional data and to student achievement in other participating states, has required uncommon leadership by many persons. The chief state shool officers in the participating states--S. John Davis, Virginia; Robert McElrath, Tennessee, and Ralph Turlington, Florida--led this bold move. Their state testing directors and staff--Thomas Fisher in Florida, Joy McLarty in Tennessee, and Claude Sandy assisted by Elaine Grainger in Virginia--took the concept and the technology and overcame the obstacles inherent in doing something that is new and controversial. The staff of the National Assessment of Educational Progress who worked closely with this project, including Executive Director Archie Lapointe, Jules Goodison, Al Beaton, Ina Mullis, and Douglas Rhodes, were diligent in their efforts to make the program successful. SREB staff, Lynn Cornett and Mark Musick, assisted with this project from the initial discussions to its successful completion.

And finally, although their names are not available, there are the principals, the teachers, the testing coordinators, and the thousands of students who participated. It is they, and those who follow them, who ultimately will benefit if this kind of program helps sustain the public interest and commitment to the current emphasis on quality improvement in education.